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ABSTRACT

Specifically designed for teachers, administrators, and other school decision-makers, this monograph outlines ways quality circles can be used to improve educational planning and decision-making. The first of four sections defines quality circles as a group of workers who identify, analyze, and propose solutions to problems within their scope of expertise. Section II outlines the interaction method, a set of tools and techniques for managing successful meetings based on participant roles and effective management and planning. Section III, which discusses the meeting as a decision-making tool, describes why meetings are held, types of task oriented meetings, and reasons meetings fail or succeed. Finally, in section IV, the author delineates the specifics of holding educational quality circle meetings. The important components for success are good planning (purpose, agenda, facility), the participants (facilitator, recorder, members, secretary), meeting management (plan, technique, record keeping, ground rules), the group process, and follow through on decisions. Included are a pre-assessment and a concluding exercise. (MD)

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MANAGING QUALITY CIRCLES EFFECTIVELY

prepared by

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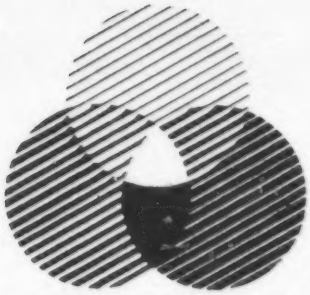
June, 1982



EDUCATIONAL QUALITY
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FOREWORD

This monograph is one of a series of publications developed for the Educational Quality Circle Consortium, an experimental project sponsored by the San Mateo County Office of Education.

The purposes of the Educational Quality Circle Consortium are:[1]

1. to design and bring about a comprehensive staff development program for school personnel with a focus on changing the traditional hierarchical organization to one based on participatory decision-making and planning.

2. to train a cadre of school personnel who can function as change agents that will assist schools in adapting to the changing needs of their students.

The basic aim of the Consortium is to adapt the industrial Quality Circle model into an educational Quality Circle model, and to pilot the use of Quality Circles among the participating educational agencies. These include the San Mateo County Office of Education; Region V of the Association of California School Administrators; the School of Education, San Francisco State University; three public schools (a high school, middle school and elementary school); and one private high school.[2]

This monograph is about Quality Circle meetings and how they can be used to improve educational planning and decision-making. It is specifically designed for teachers, administrators, and other professionals who are key decision-makers in schools.

If you are involved in making important educational decisions, then you are probably involved in lots of educational meetings. Learning about the Quality Circle can result in better meetings, better decisions, and better use of your professional time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The author also acknowledges the technical assistance of the ISCED Community Development Institute staff members who edited and typed the initial drafts of this document.

The author acknowledges that the primary source documents for this monograph were The Quality Circle Handbook by Donald L. Dewar, How to Make Meetings Work by Michael Doyle and David Straus, and Effective Meeting Management by Don E. Halverson.

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PRE-ASSESSMENT

Circle the response that you think is the most appropriate one.

1. A Quality Circle is:

   a. a place where products are tested prior to sale.

   b. a circular seating arrangement for a meeting group.

   c. a problem-solving group of workers in an industrial firm.

2. The Interaction Method is:

   a. a psychological assessment procedure

   b. a new method for planning and conducting organizational meetings.

   c. a way to assess how people interact on the job.

3. An Educational Quality Circle is:

   a. a new game to improve the reading skills of students.

   b. a group of parents who provide volunteer services in a school.

   c. a group of school staff who participate in making educational decisions.

4. Which of the following is a key reason for holding an Educational Quality Circle meeting?

   a. to inform parents about the school plans for the year.

   b. to identify and solve an education problem in an instruction unit.

   c. to advise pupils about the importance of doing neat school-work.

5. Which of the following is not a task-oriented meeting?

   a. a meeting to solve the problem of pupil tardiness after the lunch period.

   b. a meeting to inform the staff about the new discipline policy for the school.

   c. a meeting to write unit plans for fifth grade students.

6. Which of the following factors has the least effect on the outcome of a meeting?

   a. the use of audiovisual materials to explain an agenda item.

   b. planning the agenda for the meeting and informing the participants in advance.

   c. defining the roles of the various participants and having ground rules to govern their conduct.

7. Which of the following things is the least important when choosing a meeting room for a small group, task-oriented meeting?

   a. the seating arrangement and physical environment.

   b. the size of the room and its location.

   c. the availability of microphones for the participants.

8. A facilitator is responsible for:

   a. handling the procedural matters in a meeting.

   b. deciding on the purpose of a meeting.

   c. preparing the agenda for a meeting.

9. A recorder is responsible for:

   a. distributing the meeting agenda in advance.

   b. taking accurate minutes in a good notebook.

   c. writing an accurate record of the discussion in a highly visible manner which can be seen by all of the participants.

10. The group members in a meeting:

    a. control what happens throughout the meeting.

    b. rotate responsibility for facilitating the group during a meeting.

    c. take their own notes to remember what has been discussed.

11. The supervisor of a group:

    a. should either facilitate or help to facilitate a meeting.

    b. should participate in a meeting like the other group members.

    c. should relinquish all authority in a meeting to guarantee active staff participation.

12. A meeting management plan should include:

    a. a strategy for introducing, discussing and closing each agenda item.

    b. guidelines for announcing a meeting in the staff newsletter.

    c. recommendations on the decisons to be made at a meeting.

Answers: 1. c 2. b 3. c 4. b 5. b 6. a

7. c 8. a 9. c 10. a 11. b 12. a

INTRODUCTION

> "There are a number of common symptoms of poor organization which usually require no further diagnosis. There is, first, the symptom of too many meetings attended by too many people."
>
> Peter Drucker[3]

Meetings! Meetings! and More meetings! Isn't there a better way?

The obvious answer to this simple question is sometimes yes and sometimes no. Sometimes, there is a better way and other times there isn't.

We all know that meetings are not a panacea for solving school problems. In fact, some meetings are unnecessary and some are unproductive.

But meetings are a normal part of one's professional life. Many school problems are best handled by a structured interaction between three or more individuals -- i.e., a meeting -- either to inform, to discuss, to plan, to decide, or to assess.

Since meetings are inevitable, the basic question is not really whether to hold meetings, but rather how to make meetings work. In other words, how can school meetings be conducted so that they are more rewarding, more efficient, and much more productive.

The Interaction Method

There is a very pragmatic way to run a successful meeting known as the Interaction Method. Simply defined, the Interaction Method is a process for planning and conducting a task-oriented meeting.[4] It is easy to learn and works well in many kinds of organizations.

The keys to a successful meeting are good planning, effective management, and active participation. The Interaction Method is a set of practical guidelines for organizing a meeting, defining the rules of participation, and clarifying the roles of the participants.

This method is a proven technique for conducting an effective meeting. It keeps a group focused on a task; it maximizes participation; and it results in better planning and decision-making.

The Quality Circle

The Quality Circle is a unique organizational model used by many industrial firms throughout the world. Simply defined, it is a group of workers from the same organizational unit who meet regularly to discuss problems, identify solutions, and take corrective action.[5]

The Quality Circle uses the practical knowledge and creativity of industrial workers to solve many of the problems related to production. In other words, the workers who are responsible for doing a task get involved in deciding how the task is to be done.

There is ample evidence that Quality Circles work well in industry -- they increase productivity, improve efficiency, and build morale. There is every reason to believe that Quality Circles can work just as well in our schools.

The Educational Quality Circle

American schools are hierarchical organizations. In a hierarchical organization, the final responsibility for making a decision is assigned to one individual. However, it is a common practice to delegate such authority to subordinate staff in the organization.

As indicated previously, the Quality Circle is an industrial model in which part of the responsibility for making decisions is delegated to the workers who are directly involved in production. Its most important feature is that workers in the various production units actively participate in the decision-making process.

The Educational Quality Circle is designed to function like the industrial Quality Circle. In the Educational Quality Circle school, part of the responsibility for making educational decisions is delegated to the instructional staff.

In other words, the instructional staff actively participate in making educational decisions for their instructional units. They meet regularly to define their problems, identify solutions, and take corrective action within the defined limits of their authority.

The Educational Quality Circle Meeting

A major feature of the industrial Quality Circle is that workers have problem-solving meetings on a weekly basis. Effective meetings are one of the key factors in the success of Quality Circles.

In Educational Quality Circle schools, the instructional staff hold weekly meetings to solve educational problems. It is very important that these Quality Circle meetings be well planned and organized. Since

the Interaction Method is a good technique for managing effective meetings, it is this method that is suggested for Educational Quality Circle Schools.

Organization of the Monograph

This monograph describes how to use the Interaction Method to conduct meetings in Educational Quality Circle schools. It is organized into the following sections:

1. The Quality Circle: An Overview
2. The Interaction Method: An Overview
3. The Meeting as a Decision-Making Tool
4. Holding an Educational Quality Circle Meeting

Goal and Objectives

The basic goal of the monograph is to inform the administrators and instructional staff in Educational Quality Circle Schools about how to use the Interaction Method to conduct effective task-oriented meetings.

Upon completion of the monograph, the reader will be able to:

1. Define the following terms: Quality Circle, Interaction Method, and Educational Quality Circle;

2. Explain how an Educational Quality Circle meeting is conducted by using the Interaction Method;

3. Identify the four major reasons for holding a meeting;

4. Describe the five main types of task-oriented meetings;

5. List five factors that contribute to the success or failure of meetings;

6. Diagram a meeting room and indicate the location of all participants on the diagram;

7. Describe the roles of a facilitator, recorder, group member, and unit supervisor in a meeting;

8. Outline a plan for conducting an Educational Quality Circle meeting at the school site.

SECTION I

The Quality Circle: An Overview

> "Quality is a thought that resides in every executive's mind. Participative management is the vehicle that puts it in the mind of every employee in an organization."
>
> D. L. Dewar[6]

What Is The Quality Circle?

Quality Circles are a product of American corporate management theory. Although conceived in the United States, the "Quality Control Circle" was developed in Japan during the early 1960's. The concept was exported to Japan in order to upgrade the quality of production and to change its image as a source of cheap, inferior products.

A Quality Circle is "a group of workers from the same area who usually meet for an hour each week to discuss their problems, investigate causes, recommend solutions, and take corrective actions when authority is in their purview."[7] It is based upon voluntary participation, participatory management, and collaborative decision-making.

The Quality Circle recognizes that the work force in an organization is its most valuable and untapped resource. It operates on the premise that an informed and properly trained work force can creatively solve problems related to production.

In a practical sense, the Quality Circle returns some of the responsibility for the quality of work to the workers, who make "quality control" decisions about the work for which they are responsible. In other words, it brings workers into the mainstream of the organizational decision-making process.

Over the past two decades, Quality Circles have become a widespread practice throughout the industrial world. They have proven to be an effective organizational strategy for increasing productivity, improving efficiency, and building staff morale.[8]

How Does The Quality Circle Work?

The most authoritative publication on Quality Circles is the excellent work by Donald L. Dewar entitled The Quality Circle Handbook. This publication is the primary source for the following description of the way in which Quality Circles operate.[9]

The six basic steps in the operation of Quality Circles are listed below and diagrammed on the following page.

Step 1 Problem identification by anyone

- defining the range of problems that could be addressed by the Quality Circle

Step 2 Problem selection by members

- choosing the specific problems that will be addressed by the Quality Circle

Step 3 Problem analysis by members

- investigating the causes of problems and deciding on the most feasible alternative for corrective action

Step 4 Recommendation to management

- transmitting the proposed corrective action(s) to management for its review and consideration

Step 5 Review of recommendation by management

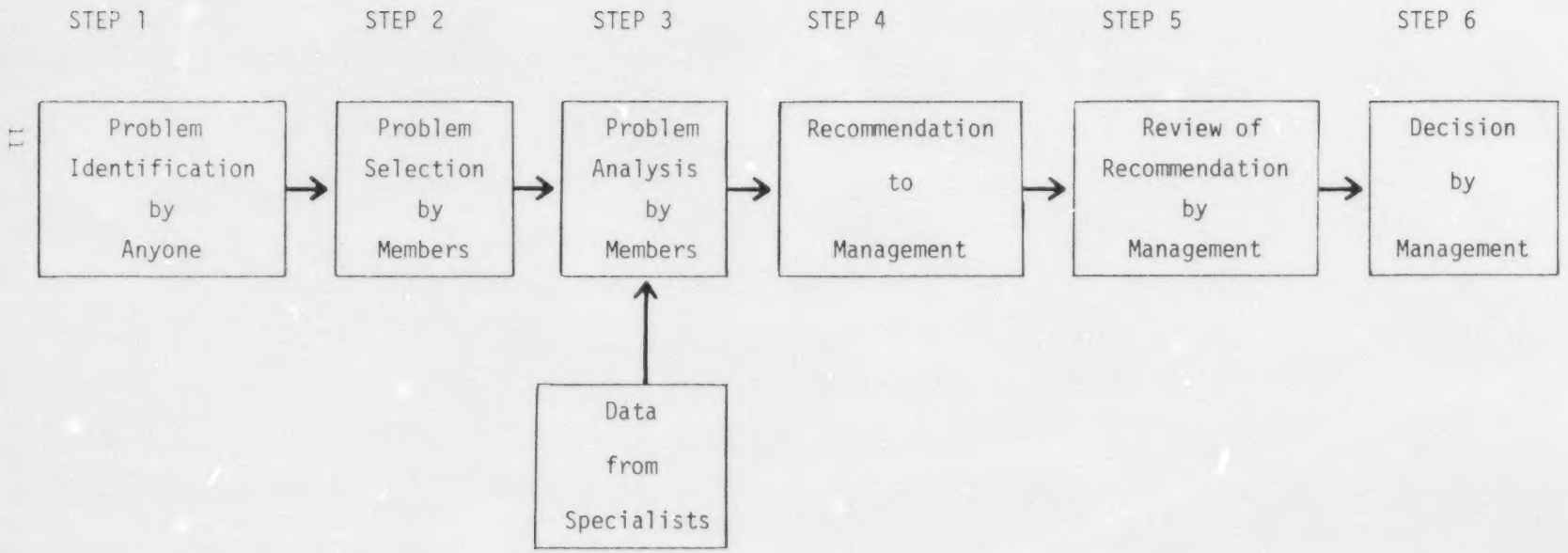
- consideration of the proposed action(s) by those with the final authority and responsibility for the decision

Step 6 Decision by management

- approval or disapproval of the recommended action(s)[10]

FIGURE 1

The Quality Circle Decision-Making Process



Problem Identification by Anyone

Following training of the Quality Circle leader and group members, they begin the task of problem identification. Problem identification is defining a range of issues that are within the scope of expertise of the Quality Circle members.

There are a variety of techniques used to identify problems. However, brainstorming sessions have proven to be the most effective technique in terms of cost, time and utility. Although problems are usually suggested by the Circle members, it is common to solicit ideas from management, other staff, or clientele.

Quite often, the problems identified by a Quality Circle --

> "are the uninteresting, mundane ones that are not particularly exciting to anyone else. These are the problems that either no one else is aware of; or, if they do know they exist, they are either too busy to give them attention, or are simply not interested enough to care. Someone ought to be concerned about these 'little' impediments to progress; and there is probably no one more qualified to identify, analyze and solve them than the people who put up with them every day. These are truly the experts."[11]

Dewar stresses that Quality Circles should not deal with those major organizational problems that have defied solution over a long period of time. Rather, Circle members should concentrate on the day-to-day problems that need attention and are within the scope of their professional expertise.

Problem Selection

Given a range of identified problems, the Quality Circle then lists them in order of priority and selects those that it intends to address. It is important that the Quality Circle select its own problems. Otherwise, the group members might consider the Quality Circle to be a management sham and refuse to participate on a voluntary basis.

"There have been instances where management reacts unfavorable to the idea that Circle members select their own problems ... This concern about management authority being eroded is unnecessary ...

Management insists that certain quality standards, cost limitations, and prescribed schedule commitments be adhered to. The (Circle) members know better than anyone else what impediments or obstructions are making it difficult for them to do these things."[12]

Dewar stresses that Quality Circles should select only those problems that are within their range of expertise. Perhaps the best advice for Quality Circles is to limit problem selection to their own work unit where the Circle members are the experts.

Problem Analysis

Once a problem has been selected, the Quality Circle then does an analysis of the problem. Problem analysis is simply investigating the causes and, on this basis, choosing the most feasible alternatives for corrective action.

As with most things, the best way to analyze a problem is to develop a plan of action. A plan of action should include objectives which are separated into milestones, activities for accomplishing the objectives; a time schedule; and the assigned responsibilities of the Circle members. Quality Circles that use plans of action to analyze problems are invariably the most successful. Good decisions do not often occur by chance but rather by good organization.

There is a tendency for Quality Circles to want to give problems to the "experts" in the organization, for this is the way things have usually been done. There is also a tendency for the Circle leader to try to analyze problems for rather than with the Circle members. It is imperative that the Quality Circle itself be responsible for analyzing the problems that it has selected.

> "...(Having the Quality Circle analyze its own problems) is the proven most cost effective way to do it...Member involvement in something that will change the way they do their work is important to assure acceptance of the change...
>
> Leaders (taking) problems suggested by the Circles and (developing) solutions for them on their very own...occurs more often than it should. The members do not get the satisfaction of being involved in the actual problem analysis process. They may even resent the fact that the leader has solved the problem in a manner with which they may not totally agree...Perhaps the biggest negative...is that the leader is preventing a people-building opportunity from occurring."[13]

Dewar indicates that it is advisable for Quality Circles to seek technical assistance from outside sources when necessary. He stresses, however, that consultants should have a temporary association with the Quality Circle, provide only the technical assistance that is requested, and then step aside for the Quality Circle to continue putting its plan of action into effect.

Recommendation to Management

When the Quality Circle has decided on a course of action to solve a problem, it communicates its recommendations to management. It is preferable to communicate recommendations in an oral presentation rather than in writing.

> "Most people have had unpleasant experiences depending on written communication. Often, the person with good ideas does a relatively poor job of communicating them (in writing) to others."[14]

The management presentation is planned and organized by the Quality Circle. The Circle members present a comprehensive overview of the problem including a clear definition, documented causes, alternative solutions, and the recommended course of action. A variety of graphics is used to complement the oral presentation.

Dewar suggests that the management presentation is one of the most "exciting" phases of the Quality Circle operation. It is also a "fantastic" method for giving recognition to the Quality Circles.

Review of Recommendation by Management

Quality Circles operate according to the normal lines of authority in an organization. In fact, it is imperative that the normal management channels be followed precisely when making recommendations. For this reason, recommendations are always made to the manager who supervises the Quality Circle leader.

> "This is not to say that higher-level management may not be present at a management presentation. In fact, it is likely that higher-level management people will often be present; but they are there as observers, not as decision-makers."[15]

Once a recommendation has been made by the Quality Circle, the manager reviews and considers the proposed course of action. This review usually takes place in a short period of time. The manager has the option to return the recommendation to the Quality Circle for additional study before making a final decision.

Decisions by Management

The manager has the authority to approve or disapprove a Quality Circle recommendation. An affirmative decision must first be made before a Quality Circle solution can be put into effect.

The decision to approve a recommendation is often made during the meeting where it is presented. This is because of the thorough preparation of the Quality Circle and the prior knowledge of the manager.

> "...The manager usually knows what the Circle has been working on, and what its recommendation is going to be, long before the presentation takes place. This is reasonable because...the Circle leader should be keeping his supervisor informed as to what is going on in his work area concerning normal work functions."[16]

When the manager does not approve a recommendation, it is important that a detailed explanation be given to the Quality Circle. Sometimes the manager may suggest a modification or an alternative that is deemed to be more feasible.

Dewar indicates the 85% to 100% of Quality Circle recommendations are usually approved by management. He stresses the importance of Circle members selecting only the problems that lie totally within their expertise. This is primarily because their efforts will be applied in areas with the greatest potential for success.

Summary

Quality Circles identify, analyze and propose solutions for problems that are within the scope of their expertise. The Circle leader and members work together during each phase of the decision-making process.

Dewar states that successful Quality Circles are rarely due to chance. They succeed because of the following factors.[17]

- Management is supportive
- Participation is voluntary
- There is a people-building attitude
- Training is provided
- Team work is encouraged
- Recognition is provided
- Members select problems in their area of expertise
- Circles solve, not just identify, problems.

In Japan, and more recently the United States, it has been demonstrated that Quality Circles increase productivity and promote synergy (combined, cooperative action in industrial organizations. There is growing evidence that Quality Circles can yield similar results in our schools.

EXERCISE I

QUALITY CIRCLES

Read the following statements about Quality Circles. Indicate whether the statements are true or false.

True	False		
_____	_____	1.	Quality Circles are industrial workers who participate in decisions about production.
_____	_____	2.	All workers should be required to participate in a Quality Circle.
_____	_____	3.	Management should decide the problem-solving activities of Quality Circles.
_____	_____	4.	Quality Circles can deal with any problems that they want to -- even those outside their area of expertise.
_____	_____	5.	The best way for a Quality Circle to solve a problem is to have a plan of action.
_____	_____	6.	It is alright for outside experts to make decisions for Quality Circles.
_____	_____	7.	It is not necessary to let a Quality Circle know the reasons why management rejects a recommendation.
_____	_____	8.	Quality Circles work best when management is supportive, teamwork is encouraged, and members are given recognition for their accomplishments.

Answers: (1) T (2) F (3) F (4) F

(5) T (6) F (7) F (8) T

SECTION II

The Interaction Method: An Overview

> "The way an organization chooses to make decisions has a significant impact on the quality of its decisions and on the group's very survival."
>
> Doyle and Straus[18]

What Is the Interaction Method?

The Interaction Method is a good way to improve decision-making in small group, task-oriented meetings. This new method for conducting meetings is described in the exceptional book, How to Make Meetings Work, by Michael Doyle and David Straus.

Doyle and Straus did extensive research on hundreds of organization meetings. They analyzed the behavior of successful leaders and participants; they examined relevant multi-disciplinary theory from the social sciences; and they thoroughly field-tested their ideas. On this basis, they designed a "simple system" for increasing the effectiveness of meetings.[19] It works in all kinds of organizations.

Simply defined, the Interaction Method is a set of tools and techniques for managing a successful meeting. It improves the quality of leadership and participation in meetings and results in better decisions. People get more done in less time with more satisfaction.

The Interaction Method is based upon two important factors: (1) the roles of the participants in a meeting and (2) effective planning and meeting management. These two factors are invariably among the keys to the success of any meeting.

The four primary participants in a meeting run by the Interaction Method are the facilitator, the recorder, the group member and the manager/chairperson. Each of the participants has a specific function and a clearly defined responsibility.

The success of a meeting -- regardless of who runs it or who participates -- is usually based on careful planning and effective meeting management. The Interaction Method provides specific guidelines for planning and conducting a successful meeting.

The Interaction Method is used by thousands of people in business, in government, in religious and community organizations. It is easy to learn, easy to apply, and usually produces results.

How Does the Interaction Method Work?

As indicated previously, the Interaction Method is based upon two important factors related to successful meetings: (1) the role of the participants and (2) effective planning and meeting management. The following description of the Interaction Method is taken from the publication, How to Make Meetings Work.

The Role of the Participants in a Meeting

There are four primary participants in meetings run by the Interaction Method -- the facilitator, the recorder, the group member, and the manager/chairperson. Each participant has a specific role and is equally responsible for the success or failure of a meeting.

The Facilitator

One of the keys to handling the problems of authority and participation in a meeting is to have a neutral party conduct the meeting -- a person who is not the manager or supervisor of a group, and who does not get directly involved in making the decisions.

> "The facilitator is a meeting chauffeur, a servant of the group. Neutral and non-evaluating, the facilitator is responsible for making sure that the participants are using the most effective methods for accomplishing their task in the shortest time...The facilitator helps keep the group on track until it has accomplished what it set out to do or wants to change direction. By getting all of the group members to use the same tool at the same time, the facilitator can transform a group...(into) a creative, coordinated organism."[20]

The facilitator's role is to have the group deal with a common subject and common process at all times. He or she focuses the group on a task by remaining neutral, making procedural suggestions, protecting the participants from personal attack, and involving everyone in the discussion.[21]

The Recorder

One of the keys to handling the problems of recall and feedback in a meeting is to have a neutral party record the meeting -- a person who writes a visible and accurate record of what is being discussed, while not getting directly involved in making the decisions.

> "Like the facilitator, the recorder is a neutral, nonevaluative servant of the group. The role of the recorder is to create a (group) memory by writing down in full view of the group the main points of what is said, using the words of the group members...
>
> A skillful recorder will produce a clearly legible record capturing the key ideas of the meeting on large sheets of paper (placed on) the walls of the meeting room...Members are not preoccupied by the process of recording."[22]

The recorder's role is to write an accurate record of the proceedings of the meeting. He or she remains neutral, does not edit or paraphrase the statements of the speakers, and records the main ideas so that they are visibly preserved for the group.[23]

The Group Member

One of the keys to handling the two problems of misinformation in meetings and follow-through on tasks is to have the right people to participate -- those who know something about an issue, can do something about it, and are to be involved in putting the decisions into effect.

"The group member is an active participant in the meeting. It is the responsibility of the group member to keep the facilitator and recorder in their neutral roles and to make sure that ideas are recorded accurately. As long as the meeting is being run by the Interaction Method, the control of what happens rests in the hands of the group members. They can make procedural suggestions, overrule the suggestions of the facilitator, and generally determine the course of the meeting."[24]

The group member's role is to be an informed participant. The member knows that the group is in charge of the meeting; that the facilitator will handle all procedural matters; and that the recorder will maintain an accurate record of the proceedings. Group members are free to devote their total attention to the discussion and to being constructive participants.[25]

The Manager/Chairperson

One of the keys to handling the problem of domination of a meeting by a supervisor is to have the supervisor participate as a group member -- but without giving up any authority except the responsibility for facilitating the meeting.

"The manager/chairperson, under the ground rules of the Interaction Method, does not run the meeting but becomes an active participant. Otherwise, he or she retains all other powers and responsibilities. The manager makes all final decisions; has the power to set constraints and regain control if not satisfied by the progress of the meeting; sets the agenda; argues actively for his or her point of view; urges group members to accept tasks and deadlines; represents the group in meetings with other groups; and deals with the media and the public at large."[26]

*In the Quality Circle, the presentation of recommendations to management is made by the entire group of Circle Members.

The manager/chairperson's role is to be the manager and not to run the meeting. He or she defines the limits of the group's authority, actively participates in the meeting, and does not usurp the roles of the facilitator or the recorder.

Effective Planning and Meeting Management

The main requirements for planning and managing an effective meeting are:

1. Decide on the purpose of the meeting

   - Clearly define the reason(s) for a meeting, the type of meeting, and the objectives and expected outcomes. When using the Interaction Method, the manager/chairperson determines the purpose of a meeting.

2. Decide who should participate in the meeting and provide all participants with background information in advance

   - Carefully select the participants on the basis of the expected results. When using the Interaction Method, the manager/chairperson chooses the participants for a meeting.

   - Before the meeting, provide all of the participants with adequate information on the purpose, the agenda, their roles and the expected results. When using the Interaction Method, the manager/chairperson communicates with the participants.

3. Set up the meeting room to foster constructive communication

   - Carefully choose the meeting room with attention given to the location and size, the seating arrangements, and the environmental conditions (e.g., light, temperature, and noise. When the Interaction Method is used, the facilitator secures and arranges the meeting room.

4. Define and clarify the roles of the participants

   - Clearly define the roles of all participants and clarify their roles before and again at the beginning of the meeting. When using the Interaction Method, all the participants -- facilitator, recorder, group members and manager/chairperson -- together define and clarify their roles in a meeting.

5. Adhere to certain rules of procedure during the meeting

   - Clearly define the set of rules that govern how the meeting is to be conducted based upon the various roles of the participants. When using the Interaction Method, the participants -- facilitator, recorder, group members and the manager/chairperson -- together define the operating rules for a meeting.

6. Record and communicate the results

   - Carefully maintain a visible and accurate record of the discussion and conclusions reached during the meeting. When using the Interaction Method, the recorder is responsible for the official proceedings.

   - Within the shortest possible time, transmit a copy of the proceedings to all of the participants. When the Interaction Method is used, the recorder coordinates typing and transmittal of the proceedings.

7. Follow-through on all assigned tasks

   - Complet[illegible] task that was assigned during the meeting by the [illegible]ished deadline. When using the Interaction Method, t[illegible]anager/chairperson coordinates the completion of follow-up tasks.

Summary

The Interaction Method is an effective way to plan, organize and manage a successful meeting. It improves participation, communication, and yields better results.

Good meetings rarely occur by chance. They require proper planning and coordination. Doyle and Straus state that the five ingredients of an effective meeting are:

- There must be a common focus on content.
- There must be a common focus on process.
- Someone must be responsible for maintaining an open and balanced communication flow.
- Someone must be responsible for protecting individuals from personal attack.
- Everyone's role and responsibility must be clearly defined and agreed upon.[27]

The Interaction Method has worked for all kinds of people in many kinds of organization. There is every reason to believe that it can also work well in Educational Quality Circle schools.

EXERCISE II

THE INTERACTION METHOD

Read the following statements about the interaction Method. Indicate whether the statements are true or false.

True	False		
_____	_____	1.	The Interaction Method is a way to organize and manage a successful meeting.
_____	_____	2.	The success of a meeting is usually dependent upon careful planning and effective meeting management.
_____	_____	3.	The facilitator runs the meetings, and he or she gets directly involved in helping to make decisions.
_____	_____	4.	The recorder writes a visible and accurate record of what happens in a meeting.
_____	_____	5.	Group members do not need to actively participate in a meeting since there is a facilitator to run it and a recorder to take the minutes.
_____	_____	6.	The manager/chairperson gives up all authority in meetings run by the Interaction Method.
_____	_____	7.	When planning a meeting, be sure to define the purpose, participants, and expected results.
_____	_____	8.	Meetings are most successful when there is a common focus, good communication, and clearly defined participant roles.

Answers: (1) T (2) T (3) F (4) T

(5) F (6) F (7) T (8) T

SECTION III

The Meeting As a Decision-Making Tool

> "Just think of all the decisions made by small groups of men and women that directly affect your life. Issues are being discussed and decisions made at this moment which will have a tremendous impact on the future of all of us ... Like it or not, most important decisions made in the United States every day are made in meetings of small groups.
>
> Doyle and Straus[28]

"We are a meeting society," state Doyle and Straus. They report that more than eleven million meetings are held daily in the United States.

Individuals who attend just four hours of meetings each week spend about 9,000 hours or one year of their lifetime in meetings. Corporate executives may spend about one-half of their professional lives in meetings, and middle management about one-third.

The average organization spends about seven to fifteen percent of its annual budget on meetings. That's $70,000 to $150,000 out of a million dollar budget.[29]

As you know, a lot of time and money is also spent on meetings held in schools. Since meetings are so time consuming and expensive, it makes sense to try to hold meetings in which something is accomplished.

Why Hold Meetings?

There is a large body of literature on meetings that explores this basic question. As would be expected, there are almost as many reasons for holding meetings as there are authors on the subject.

Jay states that meetings have six functions -- to define a group; to update its knowledge; to clarify its aims; to commit the members to its objectives; to build teamwork among the members; and to clarify the status relationships.[30]

Chellow and Trott suggest that meetings are necessary when two-way communication is preferred; information from others is necessary; creative input is desired; and decisions require group implementation.[31]

Doyle and Straus indicate that meetings are held for organizational survival; to accomplish tasks in face-to-face encounters; to communicate or receive information; to clarify issues and responsibilities; to solve problems requiring other's knowledge and expertise; to fulfill psychological needs (e.g., togetherness, trust, belonging, and isolation); and to involve others in solving a problem or making a decision.[32]

Halverson cites five reasons for holding meetings -- to have a message understood with the opportunity for feedback; to receive subordinates' reactions and stimulate two-way communication; to acquire more facts or expert opinions; to get others to support and carry out decisions; and to build teamwork.[33]

The common theme among these authors is that meetings are necessary, that there should always be a good reason for holding a meeting, and that a meeting should be the most cost-effective alternative.

From our analysis of the literature, we conclude that there are four major reasons for holding a meeting -- group maintenance, information sharing, decision-making, and task completion.

FIGURE 2

Why Hold Meetings?

Purpose of Meeting	Goal of Meeting
Group Maintenance	To clarify mission, aims, expectations, status roles, and to maintain the psychological health of the organization
Information Sharing	To inform about administrative or program policy, protocol, procedure and to maintain open, two-way communication
Decision-Making	To plan, to analyze, to decide, to assess and to creatively involve in the decision-making process
Task Completion	To fulfill organizational expectations for task completion and to build team participation through functional peer relationships

- Group Maintenance

  - to define a group, clarify its aims, and commit the members to its objectives

  - to clarify the role and status relationships in a group

  - to satisfy the psychological needs of the group members

- Information Sharing

  - to clarify administrative or program policy, protocol and procedure in an organization

  - to foster two-way communication between supervisors and subordinates and also among peer groups

  - to build the knowledge base of the group members

- Decision-Making

  - to unleash the creative problem-solving potential of the collective group (synergy)

  - to solve problems in face-to-face, task-oriented encounters

  - to involve subordinates in the organizational decision-making process

- Task Completion

  - to secure the support of subordinates in implementing decisions

  - to build peer relationships and teamwork for carrying out delegated responsibilities

  - to ensure the survival of the organization (and the supervisor) through the fulfillment of task expectations

In this monograph, our focus is upon the types of meetings that are held for decision-making and task-oriented purpose. These are the kinds of meetings appropriate for Educational Quality Circles.

The Types of Task-Oriented Meetings

There are three basic ways to classify meetings -- in terms of their size, their frequency, and/or their purpose.

Chellew and Trott describe four types of school meetings classified according to their size and purposes -- large staff meetings: committee meetings; decision-making meetings; and discussion groups.[34] Jay lists three types of meetings classified according to their frequency -- daily meetings; weekly or monthly meetings; and irregular, occasional or "special project" meetings.[35]

Doyle and Straus discuss five types of meetings defined in terms of their purposes -- problem-solving meetings; decision-making meetings; planning meetings; reporting meetings; and feedback meetings.[36]

Halverson lists three types of meetings defined according to their objectives -- task-oriented meetings; information-giving or training sessions; and rap sessions. He indicates that the five types of task-oriented meetings are (1) planning meetings; (2) problem-solving meetings; (3) decision-making meetings; (4) data-gathering meetings; and (5) brainstorming meetings.[37] These types of task-oriented meetings are shown in Figure III and discussed below.

FIGURE 3

The Types of Task-Oriented Meetings

TYPE OF MEETING	OBJECTIVE OF MEETING
Planning Meeting	To develop a plan for completing a task with objectives, activities, deadlines, and assigned responsibilities
Problem-Solving Meeting	To select the most feasible alternative for solving a problem based upon thorough investigation and analysis
Decision-Making Meeting	To make the most rational judgment about an issue based upon thorough investigation and analysis
Data-Gathering Meeting	To collect all of the information necessary to make an informed judgment about a problem or issue
Brainstorming Meeting	To generate the maximum number of suggestions about an issue in the shortest possible time

Planning Meetings

The objective of a planning meeting is "to develop a plan as a group and obtain consensus about it." By our definition, a plan consists of a set of objectives broken into milestones, the major activities for accomplishing the objectives, a time schedule with specific deadlines, and the assigned responsibilities of group members.

Generally, a plan can be long-range (one to three years) or short-range, policy or program-oriented, and for internal or external purposes. In Educational Quality Circle school meetings, planning is usually short-range, program-oriented, and for internal, school-related purposes.

Problem-Solving Meetings

The objective of problem-solving meetings is "to define, analyze, and select a solution among alternatives." In other words, problem-solving is a set of rational steps for finding a solution to an issue.

It involves clearly defining a problem; documenting its causes; stating and examining the most feasible alternative solutions; and making a rational judgment about the best solution based on appropriate criteria. In Educational Quality Circle meetings, problem-solving is directed toward the day-to-day problems that are within the range of expertise of the Circle members.

Decision-Making Meetings

The objective of decision-making meetings is "to arrive at a group decision or a group recommendation." For our purposes, there is no significant distinction between problem-solving and decision-making.

Decision-making also requires a clear definition of an issue, the consideration of feasible alternatives, and a rational judgment based upon the evidence. Problem-solving and decision-making are functionally the same process in an Educational Quality Circle meeting.

Data-Gathering Meetings

The objective of data-gathering meetings is "to obtain information, opinions or consensus." Data-gathering is the process of collecting the information required for making an informed decision.

It involves deciding on what information is needed; how it will be collected, by whom and when; and how it will be reported. Data-gathering is usually a phase of the problem-solving or decision-making process. In Educational Quality Circle meetings, data-gathering occurs in the investigation of solutions to the problems selected by the Circle members.

Brainstorming Meetings

The objective of brainstorming meetings is "to generate a multitude of alternatives for later analysis and selection." Brainstorming is a structured process for producing the maximum number of ideas in the shortest possible time.

For a given subject, it involves rapidly stating and listing all of the suggestions by group participants without, however, any debate, analysis, or assessment of the suggestions during the brainstorming period. In Educational Quality Circle meetings, brainstorming can be used for problem identification, for generating recommended solutions, and for planning a management presentation.

In summary, there are five types of task-oriented meetings whose basic purposes are to plan, solve problems, make decisions, gather data, and/or brainstorm. Educational Quality Circles usually hold task-oriented meetings that are convened for one or more of these purposes.

Why Meetings Succeed?/Why Meetings Fail?

It is important for the members of Educational Quality Circles to know the factors that influence the results of meetings. There are endless suggestions in the literature on why meetings succeed or fail.

Jay identifies eleven factors that affect the outcome of meetings;[38] McKenzie cites seventeen factors;[39] and Martin lists thirty factors grouped into five categories.[40]

Haakenson defines six factors; Chellew and Trott discuss fourteen factors; and Halverson outlines seventeen factors in three categories on the success or failure of meetings.

Since this monograph is about using the Interaction Method in Educational Quality Circle schools, it is appropriate to review the factors cited by Dewar in The Quality Circle Handbook and by Doyle and Straus in How to Make Meetings Work.

Dewar lists the following factors that influence the outcome of meetings; leader expectations; planning and preparation; participation roles and styles; facilitation techniques; the decision-making process; the group process; the code of conduct; punctuality; and ending on time.[44]

Doyle and Straus discuss the following factors affecting the outcome of meetings; planning and preparation; the number of participants; participation roles and styles; facilitation and recording techniques; the agenda; the group process; the decision-making process; the type of communication; the code of conduct; the physical environment; and punctuality.[45]

From our analysis of the literature, it is concluded that there are five main factors which contribute to the success or failure of meetings:

1. planning for a meeting -- the purpose, agenda, and facility

2. the participants in a meeting -- who participate, their roles, and their style of participation

3. how a meeting is managed -- facilitation, recording, and the rules of procedure

4. the group process -- the kind of communication, type of decision-making, and code of conduct

5. follow-through on decisions -- the clarity of outcomes, participant responsibilities, and deadlines

The success or failure of meetings is invariably linked to these key factors. They are each discussed in the next section on "Holding Educational Quality Circle meetings."

EXERCISE III

THE MEETING AS A DECISION-MAKING TOOL

Read the following statements about meetings. Indicate whether the statements are true or false.

True	False		
_____	_____	1.	The four main reasons for holding a meeting are group maintenance, information sharing, decision-making, and task completion.
_____	_____	2.	The five types of task-oriented meetings are planning, problem-solving, decision-making, data-gathering and brainstorming meetings.
_____	_____	3.	A planning meeting is called to develop a plan of action for completing a task.
_____	_____	4.	A problem-solving meeting is called to inform individuals about a Board decision.
_____	_____	5.	A data-gathering meeting is called to decide on one of several alternative strategies.
_____	_____	6.	Brainstorming is rapidly presenting ideas and evaluating each one after it is presented.
_____	_____	7.	Meetings succeed or fail because of planning, the participants, and how decisions are made.
_____	_____	8.	Meetings work best when the participants know the purpose and expected results in advance.

Answers: (1) T (2) T (3) T (4) F

(5) F (6) F (7) T (8) T

SECTION IV

Holding An Educational Quality Circle Meeting

> "A Quality Circle is a way of capturing the creative and innovative power that lies within the work force."
>
> D. L. Dewar[46]

Planning An Educational Quality Circle Meeting

Good planning is an essential requirement for holding a successful meeting. A meeting plan should address each of the following factors: (1) the purpose; (2) the agenda; (3) the facility; (4) the participants; (5) meeting management; (6) group process; and (7) follow-through. The first three factors are discussed below; the other four factors are examined in other subsections.

Sample Statements of Purpose for Educational Quality Circle Meetings

TYPE OF MEETING	SAMPLE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
Planning Meeting	The purpose of this planning meeting is for the eigth grade teachers to develop a teacher inservice schedule for September to December 1982, including topics and recommend speakers. The plan is to be completed within 45 days and submitted to the principal.
Problem-Solving Meeting	The purpose of this meeting is for the tenth grade teachers to discuss the three recommendations on solving the problem of student tardiness and to choose a course of action. The final choice is to be made at this meeting and put into effect beginning next week.
Decision-Making Meeting	The purpose of this meeting is for the first grade teachers to decide on whether to use the Interaction Method when holding Educational Quality Circle meetings. The final decision will be under review for six months.
Data-Gathering Meeting	The purpose of this meeting is for the third grade teachers to compile the statistics on pupil attendance which will be used for parent notification. Data is to be submitted to the Vice Principal within two weeks.
Brainstorming Meeting	The purpose of this meeting is for the ninth grade teachers to generate a list of the reasons for low parent participation during conference week. The list will be used as background material for next week's problem-solving meeting on parent participation.

The Purpose of a Meeting

Unless there is a clearly defined purpose, there should be no meeting! Conversely, if there is a meeting, it should have a clearly defined purpose.

Before calling a meeting, consider whether it is really necessary, whether it is the most cost-effective approach, and whether it can actually yield the desired results.

The purpose of a meeting should be stated as a measurable objective indicating what is to be done, by whom, when, and the desired standard of accomplishment. In other words, it should specifically define why in terms of what, who, when, and how much.

In the previous section, it was stated that there are usually four main reasons for holding a meeting: group maintenance; information sharing, decision-making and task completion. Whatever the reason, a clearly defined purpose is one of the keys to a successful Educational Quality Circle meeting.

The Agenda For a Meeting

Above all else, an agenda should be directly linked to the purpose of a meeting. It's like a road sign that tells where you are going and just how far you've come. It's also like a road map. If it isn't followed, you will probably get lost.

According to Doyle and Straus, a meeting agenda should state the name of the group; the title of the meeting; the convenor; the place; the date; and the starting and ending times. It should indicate the type of meeting, the desired results, background materials and what to bring.

It should identify the manager/chairperson, facilitator, recorder, group members, resource persons and observers. It should define the meeting method (e.g., Robert's Rules or Interaction Method), the decision-making method (e.g., consensus or majority rule), the final decision-maker (e.g., group or manager), and indicate all special instructions.

FIGURE V

A SAMPLE AGENDA

Name of Group: Quality Circle Group A — Date: March 18, 1982

Title of Meeting: Parent Involvement — Time: 2:00 p.m.-2:50 p.m.

Convenor: Facilitator — Place: Room 8

Type of Meeting: Problem identification

Desired Results: List of the main reasons for low parent participation

Background Materials: Article on parent involvement

Please Bring: Names of homeroom parents

Manager: Vice Principal for Instruction — Group Members:

Facilitator: District Psychologist _____

Recorder: Rotating Member _____

Resource Person: Parent Coordinator _____

Observers: None _____

Special Instructions: This meeting is requested by the Principal

AGENDA ITEM	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	PROCESS	TIME LIMIT
1. Purpose of Meeting	Facilitator	Presentation	5 minutes
2. Introductions	Facilitator	N/A	5 minutes
3. Role Clarifications	Facilitator	Discussion	5 minutes
4. Parent Involvement	Facilitator	Brainstorming	30 minutes
5. Summary	Facilitator	Presentation	5 minutes

The agenda items should be ordered and indicate the person responsible for each item, the process to be used (e.g., report or discussion), and the allocated time.[47] (A sample agenda is provided in Figure 5.)

Meetings work best when the participants know about the agenda in advance and have the opportunity to suggest agenda items.

> "Everyone should know what to expect before coming to a meeting. You must be explicit about what's going to happen, how the meeting is going to be run, (and) who is going to play what roles ... (The participants) will come prepared, and most of the common causes of confusion at the beginning of meetings will be avoided. Because most of the procedural questions will have been settled in advance, your meetings will be shorter and more effective.[48]

There is but one final word of advice on agendas; don't overload the agenda with too many items, and do use the agenda like a roadmap.

The Facility

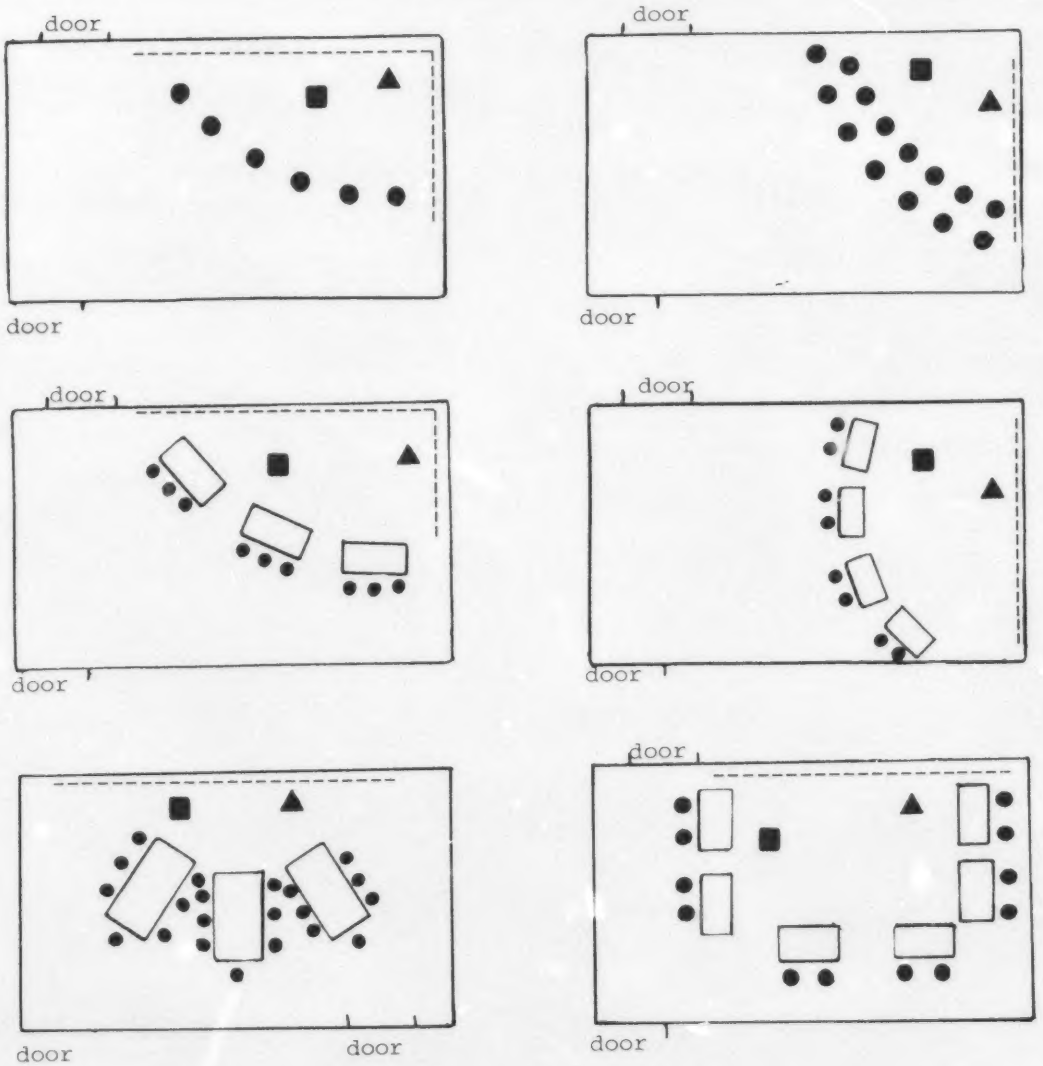
Always follow the Golden Rule! Meet with others where you would have them meet with you. A meeting room is like a car; if you take care of it, it will see you through.

According to Doyle and Straus, the main factors to consider when selecting a meeting room are the number of participants; the seating and table arrangement; the location of the facilitator, recorder, and group members; the physical atmosphere; the room environment (e.g., light, temperature and noise); and the equipment.[49]

Doyle and Straus indicate that the semi-circular seating pattern is preferred for meetings using the Interaction Method. Halverson cites two other important factors -- all doors should be behind the participants and the recorder in front of the participants. He presents several diagrams of seating arrangements that are reproduced on the following page.[50]

FIGURE 6

SUGGESTED FACILITY ARRANGEMENTS



Facilitator moves around as appropriate for eye contact and ease of communication.

Recorder remains close to butcher paper.

Source: Effective Meeting Management; Halverson, Don E., Ed.D; Page 19.

Remember, where you meet can affect the outcome of a meeting. Meetings run more smoothly when you have the right place, the right arrangement, and the right environment.

The Participants in Educational Quality Circle Consortium Meetings

If the key people can't attend a meeting, then be sure to not hold it. Decisions have little impact if the wrong people make them.

> "When you decide whom to invite to a meeting, you may be making a more important decision than you think. It will have a significant effect on what happens, because there is, of course, a direct connection between who attends the meeting and the content and quality of the decisions that will flow from it."[51]

Generally,the selection of participants for a meeting requires careful consideration. Usually, the purposes and expected results are the main criteria for choosing the participants.

There are three key factors to consider when choosing participants: (1) who knows about a topic (expertise); (2) who can make decisions (authority); and (3) who will follow through on the decisions. Also, be guided by the knowledge that large groups are impractical for task-oriented meetings.

In the Educational Quality Circle Consortium, a practical decision was made to modify the standard Quality Circle model and participant roles in order to adapt them to local conditions. One major decision was to form three decision-making groups rather than a single Quality Circle. The Consortium divided the total group into two Quality Circles (A and B) for problem analysis, while maintaining the total group for final decision-making on Quality Circle recommendations. Both Quality Circles meet one hour per week for three weeks; the total group meets one hour during the fourth week of the month.

The role of the total group is to brainstorm problems; rank them in the order of their priority; assign problems to the two Quality Circles; act on the recommendations of the Quality Circles; and serve as the decision-making body for the entire project.

The role of the Quality Circles is to work on the assigned problems; gather and analyze data; organize presentations and make recommendations to the total group; and to implement the group's decisions.

The Educational Quality Circle Consortium identified five participant roles; facilitator, recorder, group member, secretary and observer. Section II describes the standard roles of these participants when using the Interaction Method. These standard roles have been redefined as indicated in the following sections.

- The Facilitator

  The facilitator is responsible for coordinating the meeting and assisting the Quality Circle to accomplish its task. He or she is a neutral party who does not get involved in the decision-making process.

  The facilitator has to be thoroughly familiar with the purpose and desired results of the meeting. He or she prepares the agenda, serves as the recorder, coordinates the typing and distribution of minutes, and maintains a record of Quality Circle problems. The facilitator also secures a facility and arranges the meeting room.

  The facilitator keeps the group focused on what it is to do (content) and how it is to be done (process). He or she handles procedural matters, monitors the discussion, and stimulates full-group participation.

  The role of facilitator is voluntary and rotates every three months in the model used by the Educational Quality Circle Consortium. Also, the facilitator takes on the role of the recorder during the Quality Circle meetings.

- The Recorder

  When the total group meets, there is both a facilitator and a recorder. In these meetings the recorder is responsible for writing a visible and accurate record of what is being discussed by the total group.

  The recorder writes the main ideas of the participants on large sheets of paper in a visible, legible manner. He or she does not edit or paraphrase the statements of the speakers.

  The recorder should be thoroughly familiar with the agenda for the meeting. However, he or she is a neutral party who does not get directly involved in making the decisions.

  The role of the recorder is voluntary and rotates every six months in the model used by the Educational Quality Circle Consortium.

- The Group Member

  The group members determine what happens in the Quality Circle and total group meetings. Therefore, they share in the responsibility for the success or the failure of a meeting.

  The group members should be thoroughly familiar with the purpose, desired outcomes, and agenda for a meeting. They are expected to actively participate according to the ground rules of the Interaction Method.

  The group members decide what is to be discussed and the process for discussing it; they monitor the roles of the facilitator and recorder; and they generally determine the course of the Consortium meetings.

- The Secretary

  All three groups (total group and two Quality Circles) have secretaries. The role of the secretary is to take action minutes for each meeting and to type and distribute the minutes to the participants prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

- The Observer

  An observer is a neutral party who does not participate in a Quality Circle or total group meeting. He or she sits in the background and does not comment at any time. An observer can attend a Circle meeting only when approved by the Circle members.

The outcome of any Quality Circle meeting is affected by who participates, how many, and their respective roles. Meeting with the right people increases the probability of making the right decision. Moreover, it is usually more cost-effective to involve the right people in making a decision than to try selling the decision after a meeting.

Managing the Meeting

Good management makes sense! Meetings that are well managed are more likely to succeed.

Several of the factors related to good meeting management have already been discussed -- planning and preparation, the agenda and the facility. Four other important factors are: (1) the meeting management plan; (2) facilitation techniques; (3) record-keeping techniques; and (4) the ground rules for the participants.

The Meeting Management Plan

In standard Quality Circles, the manager/chairperson determines the purpose, the participants, and the agenda for a Quality Circle meeting with as many contributions as possible. He or she also provides background information to all of the participants.

In the Educational Quality Circle Consortium, the total group determines the purpose and participants, while the facilitator prepares the agenda and develops the meeting management plan. The management plan is simply the facilitator's guide for conducting the meeting and helping the Quality Circle to accomplish its task. It is used by the facilitator just as a lesson plan is used by a teacher.

The management plan is based upon the agenda and outlines the suggested methods for introduction, discussing, and concluding each agenda item. It is a flexible guide that is subject to modification by the group members.

The Facilitation Technique

Simply defined, facilitation is the process of guiding a group toward a goal by helping it to work as a coordinated unit. It involves keeping a group focused on its task, its method, and its progress. It also involves controlling the factors that inhibit effective communication and productivity.

> "By assuming the responsibility for guiding the group, (the facilitator) offers people a better opportunity to achieve what is synergy: when the group itself becomes more than the sum of individual members. This potential for a high level of creativity and accomplishment lies dormant. It is a large part of (the facilitator's) job to try to awaken the sleeping energy, like an orchestra conductor who gets each musician to play so as to create a sound that no single musician could ever produce."[52]

In many ways, facilitating a meeting is like teaching a class. It is easy to learn the rules but takes practice to master the art.

Just as in teaching, the keys to good facilitation are (1) measurable objectives (the purpose and expected results); (2) a workable plan (the Meeting management plan); (3) knowledge of the subject (the agenda);

and (4) knowledge of the participants (the group members). It is also important to have high expectations and good communication skills, and interaction skills.

In Educational Quality Circle Consortium meetings, the task of facilitating is rotated among the Circle members. Most teachers should have little difficulty in learning how to be good facilitators.

The Record-Keeping Technique

As indicated previously, a special recorder is responsible for maintaining a visible and accurate record of the total group meetings, while the facilitator has this responsibility in the Quality Circle meetings. Doyle and Straus define the visible written record as the "group memory."

> "The group memory is extremely useful as a work-in-progress and as a finished product ... It becomes a powerful visual tool, a readymade instant replay, that helps members concentrate and see what is going on. The group memory also increases the productivity of meetings after they are over by serving as an accessible record of what happened."[53]

Other important advantages of the group memory are that:

- it provides a graphic display to keep the group focused on a task
- it assures that ideas are recorded accurately and frees the members from taking notes
- it minimizes repetition and increase the sense of accomplishment
- it reduces ambiguity and accountability problems after a meeting
- it is low-cost, easy to use, and available to everyone.[54]

In Educational Quality Circle Consortium meetings, the task of recording is rotated among the Circle members. Teachers usually have little difficulty in learning how to be good recorders. The recorders are assisted by secretaries who prepare and distribute the minutes.

The Ground rules for the Participants

As indicated previously, there are five defined roles for the participants in an Educational Quality Circle Consortium meetings -- facilitator, recorder, group member, secretary and observer.

The ground rules for using the Interaction Method were introduced in Section II and discussed again in this section of the monograph. It is suggested that the reader review these ground rules for participation in Educational Quality Circle meetings.

The Group Process

Process is a term describing how one works to complete a task -- in other words, the manner, the method, or the means.

In the field of public speaking, process is the delivery style; in art, it is the design technique; and in teaching, it is the instructional method.

Group process is the way in which a group works together on a task. In the field of athletics, group process is often defined as teamwork and in organizations, as leadership and participation styles.

How you do something is usually just as important as what you do. Many times this is the cause of a good meal or a bad one, a good or bad lesson, and a good or bad meeting.

> "When using the Interaction Method, it is the group collectively that must lead itself. During a meeting the group members must decide where they are going to go and how they are going to get there. So, in the last analysis, the quantity of the meeting depends on the quality of the participants."55

Several of the factors related to effective group process have already been discussed -- prior knowledge of the purpose, expected results, and agenda for a meeting; understanding the authority of and constraints on a group; and knowing the ground rules of the Interaction Method.

Three other important factors are: (1) the decision-making process; (2) the type of communication; and (3) the so-called "Problem people" in a meeting.

The Decision-Making Process

Making a decision may be easy; making the right decision is usually more difficult.

There are three major factors to consider when a decision is to be made: (1) who has the authority to decide; (2) who participates in the decision; and (3) what is the decision-making process.

It is imperative that the limits of a group's authority be made explicitly clear. Is the group an advisory body that recommends action? Or is the group authorized to carry out what it decides without review?

Consortium Quality Circles are usually authorized to decide how they will investigate their own problems. Typically, their decisions on major educational issues are subject to review and approval by the total group.

Who forms the recommendations for the consideration by the total group? Naturally, the Educational Quality Circle members. For the reasons previously cited, it is crucial for the Quality Circle to make its own recommendations as a group.

Groups usually use one of two methods to make decisions -- majority vote based on Robert's Rules (or a modified version) and consensus agreement.

D. L. Dewar stresses that Quality Circles should base decisions on group consensus (win-win solutions) and not on majority vote (win-lose solutions). [56] Doyle and Straus also strongly recommend consensus decisions over majority decisions.[57]

Consensus is more likely to foster teamwork than majority rule. Conversely, majority rule is more likely to result in the alienation of some group members.

The Type of Communication

When there is positive group communication, there tends to be positive group process. When communication is negative, there tends to be negative group process. If there is no communication, there is no group process.

Good communication is dependent upon many factors. Perhaps the most critical factor is expressed in the Golden Rule. D. L. Dewar states,

"Every time the principle behind the Golden Rule is violated, the potential for a breakdown in communications is created.

...No one wants to be looked down upon or made to feel like a fool, particularly in the presence of others.

Man has a constant struggle for security, human dignity, and to be (somebody). When this perfectly normal human feeling is challenged, there is likely to be a breakdown in communications."[58]

Thus, there are but two suggestions to be made on fostering positive communications in your Quality Circle meeting. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!" Also, "give recognition where it is due!"

The Problem People

Below are a list of people who usually cause problems in meetings. Please be sure that you are not one of them!

- the quiet person -- deprives the group of his or her contributions
- the talkative person -- dominates the discussion and prevents others from sharing their ideas
- the negative person -- disagrees with almost everything and rarely makes a positive suggestion
- the playboy or playgirl -- seeks attention by diverting the group with witty comments
- the recognition seeker -- boasts too much about his or her personal achievements[59]
- the latecomer -- never arrives on time
- the early leaver -- never stays till the end of the meeting
- the broken record -- keeps repeating the same thing over and over
- the whisperer -- talks frequently with his or her neighbors

- the attached -- responds to personalities rather than to ideas

- the interpreter -- usually tries to speak for others

- the interrupter -- never lets others finish what they are saying

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Following Through on Decisions

People are more likely to follow through if they know what to do. Sometimes the best excuse is "I did not know!"

Follow through is often dependent on three basic factors -- the clarity of decisions, assignments, and deadlines.

Before closing a Quality Circle meeting, always review and clarify the decisions, the tasks, and the timelines.

EXERCISE IV

THE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY CIRCLE MEETING

Read the following statements about Educational Quality Circle meetings. Indicate whether the statements are true or false.

True	False		
_____	_____	1.	A good meeting plan covers the purpose, agenda, participants, facility, and decision-making procedure.
_____	_____	2.	An agenda for a meeting should include the following things: place, time, date, type of meeting and discussion topics.
_____	_____	3.	Arranging chairs in rows and columns is the best seating arrangement for a meeting.
_____	_____	4.	The Interaction Method cannot work if it is modified in any way.
_____	_____	5.	Just as in teaching, the key to good facilitation is having an effective plan.
_____	_____	6.	Group process is the way in which a group works together on a task.
_____	_____	7.	It is usually better to make decisions by consensus rather than majority.
_____	_____	8.	Education Quality Circle meetings just won't work in large urban schools.

Answers: (1) T (2) T (3) F (4) F

(5) T (6) T (7) T (8) F

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